

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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USMISSION USUN NY

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 HONG KONG 1773

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

CANBERRA FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY INGERSONN

DEPT PLS PASS CONGEN OSBORN AND AMBASSADOR BRUCE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINT, CH

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SUBJ: YEAR-END INTERNAL POLITICAL ASSESSMENT

POUCH: BUCHAREST, DACCA, JAKARTA, KATHMANDU, KUALA LUMPUR,
PHNOM PENH, SEOUL, SINGAPORE, VIENTIANE, WELLINGTON

THE FOLLOWING REPORT IS A JOINT CONGEN HONG KONG-USLO PEKING YEAR-
END ASSESSMENT ON PRC INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS, WITH CONGEN
HONG KONG HAVING PRODUCED THE INITIAL DRAFT AND USLO PEKING HAVING
WORKED ON THE PAPER AND CONCURRED IN IT.

SUMMARY. IN 1973 A FRESH CURRENT OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL ACTIVITY
Arose IN CHINA AS THE REGIME MOVED TO CLEAR UP THE LIN PIAO
EPISODE AND BROKE THE MILITARY'S GRIP ON CIVIL AFFAIRS. THE LEFT
BECAME REASSERTIVE, AGITATING AGAINST A NEW THREAT OF REVISIONISM
AND CHALLENGING UNNAMED TARGETS AMONG THE POWERHOLDERS, AND BY
EARLY 1974 THIS EMERGED AS A LIMITED NEO-CULTURAL REVOLUTION
UNDER CLOSE OFFICIAL CURBS. THE ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES REMAIN TO
BE DEFINED, PROBABLY IN SHARP STRUGGLES AHEAD. PERIPHERAL
ASPECTS OF FOREIGN RELATIONS HAVE BEEN DRAGGED INTO THE STRUGGLE.
END SUMMARY.

1. IN THE FIRST SEVERAL WEEKS OF 1974 IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT A
DISTINCT CHANGE HAD OCCURRED IN CHINA'S INTERNAL POLITICAL
CURRENT. SOMETHING LIKE A LIMITED NEO-CULTURAL REVOLUTION
EMERGED AND WAS THRUST SO SHARPLY INTO PUBLIC VIEW THAT EVENTS
SEEMED DRAMATICALLY SUDDEN. IN FACT, DEVELOPMENTS HAD BEEN
PERCEPTIBLY LEADING TOWARD A RESURGENCE OF REVOLUTIONARY AGITATION
SINCE ROUGHLY THE MIDDLE OF 1973. A MAJOR VEHICLE FOR THIS
RESURGENCE WAS THE MOVEMENT TO CRITICIZE CONFUCIUS AND LIN PIAO,
A MASSIVE CAMPAIGN WHICH WAS SAID TO HAVE RELEVANCE FOR THE
CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO LINES. THE
ANTI-LIN, ANTI-CONFUCIUS CAMPAIGN WAS MOST PROBABLY LAUNCHED BY
MAO PERSONALLY AND WAS DIRECTED INITIALLY AT ROOTING OUT REVISION-
IST TRENDS WHICH INCREASINGLY HAD EMERGED DURING 1972 AND THE
FIRST HALF OF 1973. AT THE TURN OF THE YEAR, HOWEVER, A NEW UPSURGE
IN THE CAMPAIGN MADE IT APPEAR MORE LIKELY THAT INDIVIDUAL TARGETS
WITHIN THE POWER STRUCTURE MIGHT EMERGE.

2. THE PACE OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN CHINA GENERALLY
ACCELERATED IN 1973 AS THE REGIME BEGAN TO PUT THE LIN PIAO
AFFAIR BEHIND IT AND TO TURN AGAIN TO THE TASKS OF POLITICAL
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RECONSTRUCTION STARTED IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. THE DOMINANT
POLITICAL ROLE WHICH THE MILITARY HAD ASSUMED IN THE MANIC PHASE
OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION WAS SHARPLY CUT BACK, LIFTING WHAT
HAD IN EFFECT BEEN A SITUATION OF MARTIAL LAW. OLD BUREAUCRATS
WHO HAD BEEN STRUCK DOWN IN THAT MANIC PERIOD REEMERGED IN
GREATER NUMBERS, BUT THE FULL EXTENT OF THEIR RETURN TO AUTHORITY
REMAINED UNRESOLVED. THERE WAS ALSO A NEW AND RISING
REASSERTIVENESS OF VOICES ON THE LEFT CALLING WITH GROWING

INSISTENCE FOR CONTINUED REVOLUTIONARY ADVANCE AND CHALLENGING THE IDEALS AND DEDICATION OF SOME--UNNAMED--POWERHOLDERS.

3. THE FIRST MAJOR EVENT OF THE YEAR WAS THE HOLDING OF THE TENTH PARTY CONGRESS IN AUGUST, A SWIFT, SHORT, AND SECRET AFFAIR POSSIBLY HASTENED BY CONCERN THAT CONDITIONS FOR SETTING UP A NEW NATIONAL HIERARCHY WERE AS RIPE AS THEY WERE GOING TO BE AND COULD DETERIORATE. A LIKELY CAUSE FOR SUCH CONCERN WAS A WEAKENING OF THE ALLIANCE WHICH HAD FORMED AGAINST LIN. THAT ALLIANCE HAD SPANNED A BROAD SPECTRUM OF INTEREST GROUPS WHICH NOW BEGAN TO LOOK INCREASINGLY TO THEIR OWN POSITIONS OF POWER AS THE URGENCY OF THE LIN AFFAIR RECEDED. IF THE LIN CLIQUE WERE LOSERS, THE WHO WERE THE WINNERS?

4. THE CONGRESS RESPONDED TO THAT QUESTION WITH A COMPROMISE ARRANGEMENT WHICH PLUGGED THE VACATED POLITBURO SEATS OF THE LIN CLUQUE WITH NATIONAL MODEL FIGURES, A HERO WORKER, PEASANT, WOMAN, TWO MINORITY REPRESENTATIVES; PUT A MODEL YOUNG LEADER--WANG HUNG-WEN--UP AT THE TOP BEHIND MAO AND CHOU; AND SOUGHT TO BALANCE A RULING COALITION AMONG THE ESTABLISHED POLITBURO VETERANS. REHABILITATED CADRE REMAINED OUTSIDE THE FORMAL COALITION, ALTHOUGH TENG HSIAO-PING WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ELEVATED TO THE POLITBURO AND PROBABLY TO THE MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE IN EARLY 1974, A POST-CONGRESS MOVE THAT POINTED UP THE STRUGGLES AND THE MANEUVERING BEHIND THE SCENES. TENG APPEARS DESTINED FOR A MORE SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN MILITARY AFFAIRS, AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH CHOU, WHETHER COMPETITIVE OR COOPERATIVE, WILL BE CRITICAL.

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5. LIN WAS FORMALLY PURGED AND CHOU WAS AFFIRMED, BUT NOT EXPLICITLY DESIGNATED AS THE FOREMOST SUCCESSOR TO MAO. THE CONGRESS IN FACT REVEALED NO SPECIFIC SUCCESSION DECISIONS AND THE ISSUE STILL LOOMS LARGE. FORMER CULTURAL REVOLUTION STARS CHIANG CHING (MRS. MAO) AND YAO WEN-YUAN WERE PASSED OVER FOR PROMOTION, LENDING SUPPORT TO OTHER INDICATIONS THAT THE RADICAL CONFIDENTIAL

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DISRUPTIVE BRAND OF POLITICS WITH WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED REMAINED RELEGATED TO THE FRINGE OF COLLECTIVE ACCEPTABILITY. HOWEVER, A MORE RADICAL EDGE TO EVENTS IN EARLY 1974 RAISED THE POSSIBILITY THAT A NEW PHASE OF MASS AGITATION WOULD EMERGE AND GIVE THEM A RENEWED LEASE ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

6. TO THE EXTENT IT WAS POSSIBLE TOSEE A TREND TOWARD WINNERS IN THE NEW HIERARCHY, THE EYE WAS DRAWN AT THE END OF THE YEAR TOWARD THE CENTER-LEFT AND THE POSSIBLLITY OF A VAGUE FULCRUM OF POWER BETWEEN CHOUIST PRAGMIATISM AND MODERATION--ROOTED IN PREOCCUPATION WITH NATIONAL INTEREST AND THE MACHINERY OF STATE--AND A SEASONED AND AMBITIOUS LEFT, TYPIFIED BY CHANG CHUN-CHIAO. THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH A FULCRUM WAS, OF COURSE IMAGINARY. CONTENTION AND STRUGGLE WERE APPARENT IN THE LURCHING, JERKY WAY IN WHICH EVENTS OCCURRED. BUT SOME EVENTS OF THE YEAR SUGGESTED THAT A COMMON-GROUND POINT OF VIEW EXISTED AND THIS CAME THROUGH MOST CLEARLY IN DEALING WITH THE MILITARY.

7. THE SECOND MAIN EVENT OF 1973 WAS THE MASSIVE SHIFT OF MILITARY REGION COMMANDERS AT THE END OF THE YEAR. IT WAS PART OF A DECISION TO CUT BACK THE MILITARY'S ROLE IN GOVERNMENT THAT

HAD BEEN CLEARLY SIGNALLED AT THE OUTSET OF THE YEAR. IN UP-ROOTING THE MILITARY'S GRIP ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS OUTSIDE PEKING, THE MOVE CARRIED FORWARD THE PROCESS OF RETURNING THE ARMY TO THE BARRACKS, A PROCESS WHICH HAD BECOME VISIBLE AT THE CENTER TWO YEARS EARLIER BEGINNING WITH THE OVERTHROW OF LIN. IT WAS POSSIBLE TO SPECULATE THAT THE SHIFT OF COMMANDERS COMPLETED THE MAIN TASK OF THAT PROCESS. IT WAS NO MEAN ACCOMPLISHMENT TO MOVE THESE LOCAL STRONGMEN, TO PERSUADE THEM TO GO QUIETLY. AND THE REGIME HAD TO ASSURE ITSELF THAT THINGS WOULD GO BETTER WITH THEM REMOVED, PARTICULARLY THAT PUBLIC ORDER NO LONGER DEPENDED UPON THEM.

8. PRESSURE TO END THE "MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD" RULE BY THE COMMANDERS HAD LONG EXISTED AND REMAINED IN EVIDENCE, MOST VOCIFEROUSLY FROM THE LEFT, UP TO THE MOMENT OF THEIR TRANSFER. THE CAMPAIGN WHICH STARTED LATE IN THE YEAR TO DEVELOP THE URBAN MILITIA REFLECTED THE CONCERN FOR MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER. IT INDICATED AN ALTERNATIVE, BUT CONTROVERSIAL, ARRANGEMENT FOR INTERNAL SECURITY WHICH THE REGIME HOPED WOULD LESSEN THE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING TO BRING THE MILITARY IN AGAIN IN FUTURE POLITICAL STRUGGLES. THE REBUILDING OF MASS ORGANIZATIONS FOR

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YOUTH, LABOR, AND OTHER GROUPS, A PART OF THE DESIGN WHICH WE HAD EARLIER LABELED A "MAO-CHOU STRATEGY" FOR RECONSTRUCTION, DEVELOPED STEADILY IN 1973 AND ALSO HELPED STRUCTURALLY PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE MILITARY OVERLORDS. HOW THESE ORGANIZATIONS ARE AND WILL BE DIRECTED FROM THE CENTER IS UNCLEAR, HOWEVER, AND LIKE THE MILITIA, CONTROL OVER THEM OPENS OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLITICAL CONTENTION IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

9. PRAGMATIC AND MODERATE ECONOMIC POLICIES CONTINUED TO BE IMPLEMENTED, AND NEW UNDERAKINGS CONTINUED APACE, SUGGESTING THAT, IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE AT LEAST, MAJOR DISRUPTION WAS NOT ANTICIPATED. NEVERTHELESS, THE ABSENCE OF ANY MAJOR ECONOMIC POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS DURING THE ENTIRE YEAR MADE CLEAR THAT CONTENTION CONTINUES OVER LONG TERM ECONOMIC POLICY AND THE REGIME IS APPARENTLY DISINCLINED TO FOCUS DISCUSSION ON THIS AREA.

10. POLITICAL CONTENTION TOOK ON NEW VITALITY IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1973, AND A STRUGGLE DISTINCT FROM THE CRITICISM OF LIN TOOK SHAPE. A ROW CENTERING AROUND THE UNIVERSITIES AND THEN BROADENING INTO OTHER EDUCATIONAL AREAS FLARED INTO LIFE ON THE EVE OF THE PARTY CONGRESS AND BURNED ON AT YEAR'S END. A CAMPAIGN TO CRITICIZE CONFUCIUS, A DEEP-GOING ATTACK BY ALLEGORY ON REVISIONIST TRENDS, ALSO STARTED AT THE SAME TIME BY FEBRUARY 1974 HAD MERGED WITH ATTACKS ON LIN AS THE FACADE FOR A NEW MASS MOVEMENT DIRECTED AT THE CADRE. A POLITICAL JOURNAL LAUNCHED IN SHANGHAI FOLLOWING THE PARTY CONGRESS EMERGED AS A NEW MOUTHPIECE OF CRITICISM AND DISSENT ON THE LEFT, AND IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT SHANGHAI COULD AGAIN BECOME A WORK SHOP FOR

REVOLUTION, AS IT HAD BEEN IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

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11. THE COMMON DEMONINATOR OF THE REVOLUTIONARY CRIES THAT WENT UP WAS THAT A NEW TIDE OF REVISIONISM HAD BEEN DETECTED AND THAT THE IDEALS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION WERE IN DANGER OF BETRAYAL. THE REVISIONIST TREND WAS SPIED IN MANY PLACES--IN EDUCATION, IN RURAL AFFAIRS, IN THE ACTS OF POWERHOLDERS WHO

SUPPRESSED CRITICISM FROM THE MASSES. THE OUTCRY WAS SANCTIONED
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AT THE PARTY CONGRESS WITH A NEW WATCHWORD ENCOURAGING "GOING
AGAINST THE TIDE." IT WAS ALSO APPARENT BEHIND A GROWING TREND
TOWARD AFFIRMING THE "NEWLY EMERGED THINGS" OF THE CULTURAL
REVOLUTION.

12. BY THE END OF 1973 NO SINGLE EXPLICIT OBJECTIVE OF THE
OUTCRY HAD EMERGED AS FOREMOST. BUT THE RECORD OF THE PAST
TWO TO THREE YEARS WAS CLEARLY ON TRIAL. THE FOCUS WAS
PRIMARILY ON DOMESTIC MATTERS BUT IN EARLY 1974 THE CULTURAL,
INFORMATIONAL AND PROPAGANDA ASPECTS OF FOREIGN RELATIONS WERE
INTRODUCED INTO THE POLEMICS. THE MILITARY, INTELLECTUALS, AND
BUREAUCRATS WERE AMONG THE MORE APPARENT TARGETS OF CRITICISM.
IT WAS POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY CHOU AS AN IMPLICIT TARGET IN SOME
INSTANCES, AND HE APPEARED TO BE MANEUVERING TO ESTABLISH A LOW
PROFILE OF HIS PERSONAL AMBITION BY PUBLICLY DEFERRING TO OTHER
FIGURES IN THE NEW COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP, A CHARACTERISTIC
RESPONSE WHICH, AMONG HIS OTHER WILES AND TALENTS, HAS SERVED
BEFORE TO KEEP HIM AT THE TOP THROUGH TROUBLED TIMES. MOST
IMPORTANTLY, THERE WAS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT CHOU STILL HAD
MAO IN HIS CORNER.

13. THE HOLDING OF THE LONG-POSTPONED NATIONAL PEOPLE'S
CONGRESS WOULD HELP CLARIFY CHOU'S STATUS. THAT CONGRESS,
TROUBLED AND UPSET BY THE LIN AFFAIR AND NOW AGAIN UNDER PRO-
TRACTED PREPARATIONS THAT SUGGEST CONTINUING TROUBLES, RAISES ONE
OF THE BIGGEST QUESTIONS ABOUT CHOU AS A CENTER OF CONTROVERSY. AS
PREMIER, THE NPC SHOULD BE HIS BABY, DEALING AS IT DOES WITH THE
STATE RATHER THAN THE PARTY. IT SEEMED LIKELY THAT LIN FELL IN
LARGE MEASURE AS THE RESULT OF A STRUGGLE FOR THE POST OF STATE
CHAIRMAN, A POTENTIALLY COMMANDING POSITION OVER CHOU'S HEAD AS
PREMIER. UNTIL THE NPC IS RESOLVED, IT REMAINS POSSIBLE THAT
CONTENTION FOR AUTHORITY OVER CHOU'S DOMAIN CONTINUES.

14. SIGNS THAT CHOU WAS UNDER ATTACK PROMPTED SOME OBSERVERS
TO KITE THE SPECULATION THAT CHOU MIGHT FALL. IN OUR VIEW,
CHOU UNDER PRESSURE IS LIKELY TO REPEAT HIS PERFORMANCE IN THE
CULTURAL REVOLUTION, GIVING GROUND AND ABANDONING POSITIONS
RATHER THAN LET HIS BACK BE PUT TO THE WALL. IN THIS SENSE, WE
WOULD EXPECT CHOU TO PLAY A VISIBLE ROLE IN ORDERING MEASURES
TO REDRESS THE REVISIONIST CURRENT OF THE PAST FEW YEARS--
NOW UNDER ATTACK. IN SOME CASES SUCH AS THE ATTACKS ON
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WESTERN MUSIC AND THE CURRENT ANTONIONI UPROAR THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT CHOU HAS ACTED SWIFTLY TO MOVE FIRST AND CONTROL THE CAMPAIGN.

15. WHEN THE FIRST DRAFT OF THIS ASSESSMENT WAS PREPARED EARLY IN JANUARY, IT FORESAW A SHARPENING OF POLITICAL CONTENTIOUSNESS IN CHINA WITH ISSUES AND TARGETS TAKING ON BETTER DEFINITION. THE GAIN MADE IN REDUCING THE MILITARY'S PROMINANCE IN CIVIL AFFAIRS WOULD WE THOUGHT ENCOURAGE POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE MASS ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE MILITIA, HAVE YET TO BE TESTED. THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF THE PARTY CONGRESS FLATLY SPOKE OF POLITICAL STRUGGLES AHEAD AND WE FULLY EXPECTED THEM TO BE CONSPICUOUS AND TO AFFECT THE POLITICAL FORTUNES OF SOME LEADERS. WE SEE NO REASON TO CHANGE THAT VIEW AT THIS TIME, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOW MORE OF A STATEMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION THAN A PREDICTION.

16. THE NEW ASSERTIVENESS WILL CONTINUE FROM THE LEFT; WE STILL RATE THE RADICAL LEFT AS UNDERDOGS IN THE CURRENT POWER BALANCE, BUT THEIR CAPACITY FOR STIRRING THINGS UP COULD BE UNDERESTIMATED. THE MORE ESTABLISHED LEFT, REPRESENTED IN TOP COUNCILS, PROBABLY SHARES WITH THE MODERATES AN INTEREST IN MAINTAINING ORDER AT THIS TIME. THEY ARE STILL UNDER A CLOUD BECAUSE OF EXCESSES COMMITTED IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. THEY WILL BE CAUTIONS AND ADJUST THEIR POSITIONS TO FIT DEVELOPMENTS. THE NEO-CULTURAL REVOLUTION WILL CONTINUE TO EMERGE AS A NEW ANTI-RIGHTIST MOVEMENT ALTHOUGH ITS OBJECTIVES WILL BE REDEFINED AND ADJUSTED AS THE COURSE OF STRUGGLE DICTATES.

17. THE COURSE OF STRUGGLE WILL AFFECT POLICY. ALMOST CERTAINLY IT WILL INHIBIT INITIATIVES AND DEPARTURES IN THE DIRECTION OF GREATER PRAGMATISM OVER REVOLUTIONARY PURITY, MATERIAL REWARDS OVER IDEOLOGICAL ELAN, AUTHORITY OVER POLITICAL ACTIVISM. SOME PREVIOUS ADVANCES IN THESE DIRECTIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE REVERSED. THE FUNDAMENTAL DIRECTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN SET IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE DRASTICALLY AFFECTED BY ANY DOMESTIC PORTENTS WE CAN NOW SEE, BUT, WE ARE PROBABLY IN FOR A PERIOD IN WHICH PEKING DISCARDS SOME OF THE FLUMMERY OF THE PING PONG PHASE IN FOREIGN RELATIONS.

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